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In teaching Alan Paton's "Cry, The Beloved Country," a high school English teacher made extensive use of mass media in classes of both bright and reluctant students. Oral reports by students, an in-class interview with a South African exchange student, two films on South Africa, and the record and film of the novel enhanced the students' understanding and interest in reading the novel. Moreover, a symposium-type discussion based on the essay, "Alan Paton Reports on South Africa," required the students to carefully examine the novel in order to qualify or refute ideas presented in the essay. (SW)

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

Piggy squints up and tries to reason with Jack in this shot from the film of William Golding's Lord of the Flies. See Page 20 for an in-depth appraisal of the book.

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Media-mix recipe for

Cry, The Beloved Country

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by Loren Pipp ED025504

IN THIS CONTEMPORARY magazine-world, an English teacher may often assess an article and immediately acquiesce to its truth. Why does this happen? Perhaps a writer, in this case John Culkin, S.J. in "I was a Teen Age Movie Teacher" (*Saturday Review*, July 16, 1966) vividly isolates the classroom problem of teaching the contemporary novel.

Fr. Culkin refers to Marshall McLuhan's "post-literate" world—a world in which print no longer monopolizes communication within our culture. Dr. McLuhan suggests:

> If these 'mass media' should serve only to weaken or corrupt previously achieved levels of verbal and pictorial culture, it won't be because there's anything wrong with them. It will be because we've failed to master them as new languages in time to assimilate them to our total cultural heritage.

If the English teacher can partially or completely accept McLuhan's contention, the mass media as stimuli for the "post-literate" reader present inescapable teaching problems. How do the teacher and the "post-literate" reader function together? Can they? How does one *use* a mix-media? Mass media can backfire for the careless user since timing and evaluation dominate its use. Teaching devices vary as do the teachers who employ them; no single approach *works* for every novel nor for every teacher. Nevertheless, mass media can:

- free a classroom of the 180-plus school days of teacher-dominated lessons.
- place intensive responsibilities upon the user to constructively manipulate the media.
- give instant content, which if teacher prepared, would require hours of research.
- relate out of school learning to the classroom.

Loren Pipp is an Instructor of English at Ridgewood High School, Ridgewood, New Jersey.

In teaching Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Scribner's Library, $1.45), I have incorporated the mass media that appear to work for me in my classes of bright-to-reluctant students. Introducing a South African novelist is unusual since most secondary programs (as did my high school career) adhere religiously to the British and American giants. Certainly, the high school student may intermittently desire a world point of view. Indeed, other authors can supply this. My next nominations: *Nectar in the Sieve* (Signet, 60¢) by Kamala Markandya, the Indian author, or *The White Flowers* by Edita Morris, a Swedish-born author who lives in France.

Reading *Cry, the Beloved Country* offers few technical problems. In Book I (chapters 1-17) the non-white Reverend Stephen Kumalo journeys from Ndotsheni to Johannesberg in search for Absalom, his only heir and a Biblical prodigal son, and for the Reverend's sister Gertrude. Only too late does this parson-parent locate Absalom, now a charged murderer of a white social leader. Absalom confesses, "I was frightened, I fired the revolver." In Book II (chapters 18-29) the prosperous white farmer Mr. James Jarvis Esquire, of High Place, journeys too from above Ndotsheni to Johannesberg in search of justice for the death of his sole heir Arthur and in search of Arthur's meaning in "I learned all a child should learn of honour and charity and generosity. But of South Africa I learned nothing at all." A third but less dominant father-son relationship concerns John Kumalo, the bull-voiced, politician-carpenter of Johannesberg and his already-alienated son Matthew whose court exoneration the father promotes to save a father's political career. Finally, in Book III (chapters 30-36), the Reverend Kumalo journeys home to the drought-plagued, bare red hills of Ndotsheni, a land of dying children and dying cattle. Accompanying Kumalo are his new and expectant daughter-in-law and the aban-

doned son of Gertrude, now also lost to the ravages of the city.

Upon closer scrutiny, the father-son relationships of Reverend Kumalo and James Jarvis become the focus of contrast not only racially but also morally. First, in chapter 25, the umfundisi (means parson in Zuli) now emotionally embittered because his son is a confessed murderer, accidentally meets James Jarvis, who unknowingly senses the parson's misery and speaks first:

> —You are in fear of me, but I do not know what it is. You need not be in fear of me.
>
> —It is true umnumzana. You do not know what it is.
>
> —I do not know but I desire to know.
>
> —I doubt if I could tell it, unnumzana.
>
> —You must tell it, umfundisi. Is it heavy?
>
> —It is very heavy, umnumzana. It is the heaviest thing of all my years.
>
> He lifted his face and there was in it suffering that Jarvis had not seen before. Tell me, he said, it will lighten you.
>
> —I am afraid, umfundisi. It is that which I do not understand. But I tell you, you need not be afraid. I shall not be angry. There will be no anger in me against you.
>
> —Then, said the old man, this thing that is the heaviest thing of all my years, is the heaviest thing of all your years also.
>
> Jarvis looked at him, at first bewildered, but then something came to him. You can only mean one thing, he said, you can mean one thing. But I do not understand.
>
> —It was my son that killed your son, said the man.

Once more, in chapter 32, the fathers accidentally meet after Absalom's sentence of hanging, but this time the fathers wait out a storm in Kumalo's roof-leaking church. Thirdly, in chapter 34, the fathers share correspondence when Kumalo expresses his condolences to Jarvis at the death of Margaret Jarvis, and in response Jarvis acknowledges the parson's sympathies and expresses Margaret's last wish of a new church for Kumalo. Lastly, in chapter 36, at dusk as Kumalo makes his way to Mount Emoyeni the day before Absalom's hanging, Kumalo notices:

> . . . a man on a horse was there, and a voice said to him, Is it you, umfundisi?

The fathers commune, share hopes and part for the last time.

They stayed there in silence till Jarvis said,

Umfundisi, I must go. But he did not go. Instead he said, Where are you going at this hour?

Kumalo was embarrassed, and the words fell about on his tongue, but he answered, I am going into the mountain.

Because Jarvis made no answer he sought for words to explain it, but before he had spoken a word, the other had already spoken. I understand you, he said, I understand completely.

And because he spoke with compassion, the old man wept, and Jarvis sat embarrassed on his horse. Indeed he might have come down from it, but such a thing is not lightly done.

When introducing this novel and making the three-week reading assignment, I may offer a genealogy chart with the general purpose of indicating the motive and effect of each person who crossed the color line in this novel. Also, the following reports are offered to volunteers who supplement the class discussion with commentary on:

- biography of Alan Paton (1903-).
- *Too Late the Phalarope* (1953).
- *Tales from a Troubled Land* (1961).
- critical reviews of the novel (1948), film version (1952).
- the musical "Lost in the Stars" (1949).
- any five articles on current events.
- relationship of the Biblical Absalom (Samuel II) to Paton's character.

During the three-week reading period, *South African Essay: Fruits of Fear* and *South African Essay: Two Nationalisms* (films first viewed on Channel N.E.T. and obtainable from Audio-Visual Center, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana on free rental; black and white and 59 minutes each) supplement with social, economic, political and historical information. The first film concerns the social and economic views with frequent comments by Alan Paton himself. The latter explores the apartheid policy in all of its political phases with interviews of current politicians both in and outside of South Africa as well as speeches of the late Prime Minister H. F. Verwoerd.

Last year, this background was augmented by an in-class interview with a South African AFS student who consented to this interview with no questions barred. Indicative of his comments were:

Yes, his country has a double standard. Don't most countries?

Yes, their livelihood depends on apartheid.

Yes, there is lack of contact between him and non-white boys his age.

Yes, Alan Paton is read but in ninth grade only.

Yes, the Negro situation in America does not parallel the S.A. dilemma.

Yes, there is a lack of funds for non-white education.

Yes, we do fear Communism in South Africa . . .

Because of this stimulus supplied by the interview situation, I shall attempt this year to locate any African AFS student if possible to promote more personal contact.

The day preceding class discussion, each class member receives "Alan Paton Reports on South Africa," a five-page mimeographed essay reprinted from *Presbyterian Life* (June 1, 1965) encompassing present conditions of government, world attitudes, religion in South Africa and apartheid practices. The assignment involves the student's selection of any ten ideas to qualify or to refute by direct references to the novel first and then to any other materials used in this unit. In this symposium-type situation, students volunteer readily since once an idea is offered for discussion, the idea cannot be offered again. As referee for discussion that lasts two to three days, I have observed that the bluffers who expose themselves with feckless comments sel-

dom inadequately prepare again. Becoming articulate is mandatory. Indeed, lively contradictions flourish at times. As a means of insuring the validity of certain ideas, students have requested information from the South African offices at the United Nations as well as to the South African Embassy and Travel Association. This search has frequently led to South African topics becoming senior term paper problems. By the end of the symposium, matters of literary form, Paton's inclusion of the Zuli language and the novelist's juxtaposition of certain scenes for effect (example would be chapters 9 and 12 where Paton in eighteen pages includes all the social ills via vignettes) have been illustrated.

Compositions dealing with the novel can be handled now or could be assigned later when the student is forced to determine his own theme—a much more desirable situation and a greatly encouraged one. Obviously, ideas may come from the media mentioned below.

Both on film and on record, Paton's novel lives. The 16 mm. film of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1952) starring Sidney Poitier and Canada Lee lends itself to after-school showing of under two hours. The rental fee of $25 from Audio Film Center, 10 Fiske Place, Mt. Vernon, N. Y. seems nominal in that discussion concerns the validity of the novel when transformed into film and photographic quality and flaws. In addition to the film art, the Decca recording of "Lost in the Stars" (1949) with music by Kurt Weill and words by Maxwell Anderson incorporates dialogue and song closely paralleling the novel. This long-playing record requires forty-five minutes of listening time. Side 1 traces Kumalo's journey with "The Hills of Ixopo", actually chapter 1, paragraph 3, and "Thousands of Miles" to "Murder in Parkwold-Fear" (actually chapter 12 mentioned in previous paragraph) and the scene of Jarvis's murder. Side 2 introduces the theme "Lost in the Stars" and the son's abandonment to the city, the "Cry, the Beloved Country" with its wasted childhood, wasted youth, wasted man and finally the reprise of "Thousands of Miles".

Granted: not every novel like Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* can be considered or should be considered for use simultaneously with other media. Nonetheless, where apparent mass media appear stimulating in teaching a contemporary novel and where mass media *work* in the classroom, is the teacher judicious to ignore *some* or *all* of the mass media-approach as too much trouble? As Marshall McLuhan indicates, using mass media requires new techniques and discipline. But, once the techniques are mastered and the materials are developed, the printed page can further influence students—perhaps as much as the teacher's creativity allows!